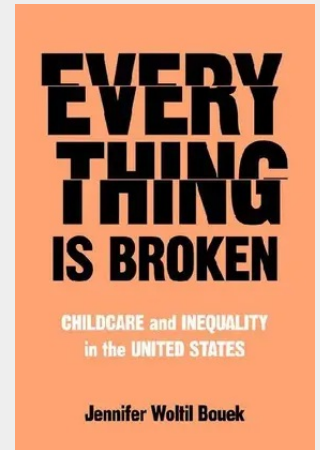


Bouek

Everything Is Broken

Childcare and Inequality in the United States

In the United States, childcare is presented in law and policy as a matter of "parental choice." Mothers, however, experience it differently. Instead of empowering families, childcare today often functions as an "invisible system" or a missing market—and one in which mothers find few good options. Yet because most mothers are also employed, they must still find a way to make do. Based on years of ethnographic and administrative research, sociologist Jennifer Woltil Bouek explores how mothers search for, secure, and maintain care for their children within this complex organizational field—and the heavy costs they bear in the process. Her work illustrates just how the American childcare system sorts and stratifies, leading to disparate (and sometimes surprising) outcomes. Grounded in personal narratives drawn from a diverse sample of mothers, childcare providers, bureaucrats, and policy advocates, *Everything Is Broken* tells a striking story of access and exclusion from the inside out.



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